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Conan Fischer

Turning The Tide? The KPD and Right Radicalism in German Industrial Relations, 1925–8

Germany's defeat in the first world war discredited the monarchy and created conditions in which a parliamentary republic was established and some major advances achieved in the realm of economic and social policy. However, it is well understood that the republic's failure to remove the imperial élites in the administrative, military, judicial and, not least, economic sector left this new Weimar Republic resting on fragile foundations. These élites were soon to attempt to reverse the constitutional and socio-economic gains represented by the republic; the captains of heavy industry being as active in this as other establishment groups.

That said, relatively little is known about the precise nature this employers' counter-offensive took within the factories, particularly during the mid-1920s — the superficially peaceful, 'golden' years of Weimar. It is well known that sections of capital were increasingly ready to confront organized labour during this period, but attempts by employers to divide their work-force and thereby undermine the coherence of the labour movement, in conjunction with willing allies among the revived company or 'yellow' unions, have received far less attention, and the crucial role of the right-radical nationalist leagues of the Weimar era has remained largely undiscussed.¹ In part, this reflects the dearth of source material which has hitherto come to light. Because this campaign achieved relatively little in the short term — the Free Trade Unions (ADGB) who were inclined towards the republican Social Democratic Party (SPD) were largely unaffected — contemporary republican commentators paid relatively little attention to the phenomenon and what discussion there was tended toward the academic.² The revolutionary Left, by contrast, which was organized within the Communist Party (KPD), was relatively weak within the factories and, therefore, appreciated the potential threat posed by this

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employers' offensive well before most of its contemporaries. The communists certainly regarded the radical Right as a serious threat to their own vision of working-class solidarity, and their detailed analyses of the situation provide valuable insights into the anti-trade union campaign mounted by the employers and the radical Right, in particular the neglected question of the Stahlhelm's role. At the same time, the KPD was, unwittingly, commenting on the origins of its later failure to capitalize decisively on the economic crisis of the early 1930s and this important, related question will also receive attention below.

Before considering the struggle between radical Left and Right in the factories, it is well to be aware of the increasingly hostile attitude shown by heavy industry to trade unionism and the ways in which the radical Right became valuable to the employers at this time. Traditionally, the German employer had been 'master in his own house', with big business in particular showing scant regard for the trade unions' claims to represent the interests of labour.³

Employer-organized company unions played a considerable role in some individual firms, allowing each employer substantial powers to dictate terms on working conditions and wage rates, not least because many workers in the Ruhr's metallurgical sector, in particular, identified with this company-based ethos.⁴ However, the revolutionary situation of late 1918 forced the employers to reassess their position. Fearing the prospect of outright social revolution and the nationalization of much of the economy, they concluded a series of agreements with the official unions which were seen as a timely pre-emptive compromise, not least to stave off nationalization or other forms of direct state intervention.⁵ The unions were recognized as equal and sole partners in wage-bargaining, which was to be conducted on a collective basis — industry by industry rather than firm by firm. With that and with the persecution of former company union members by their left-wing workmates, last-minute wartime attempts by heavy industry to re-vamp company unions as nominally autonomous bodies collapsed.⁶ There is no doubt that the powers of corporate labour had been considerably enhanced — a change that angered and even frightened many small and medium-sized firms, who felt threatened both by the unions and by the advantages enjoyed by larger firms in collective bargaining,⁷ but which big business seemed ready to accept as a satisfactory resolution to the problems

created in this sphere by Germany's defeat in 1918.⁸ Certainly the unions became a relatively conservative factor in German political life during the Weimar period and were willing to accept (and even welcome) sweeping rationalization measures during the mid-1920s and to co-operate in a series of lay-offs and wage-cuts during the ensuing depression.

Within a few years, however, heavy industry in particular came to regard the earlier agreements between capital and labour, such as the move to an eight-hour day, less favourably — not least by the mid-1920s, because of the apparent demise of the KPD as a revolutionary threat.⁹ The unions were still regarded as negotiating partners for the time being, but firms tended to seek greater autonomy in wage-bargaining, and heavy industry, notably the Ruhr coal syndicate, began to question and even undermine the fundamental tenets of the post-1918 settlement.¹⁰ In this atmosphere, heavy industry regarded trade unionism increasingly sourly. January 1921 saw the establishment of the Deutsche Volkshochschule, at which selected workers and salaried employees participated in six-week courses, which were intended to create a new cadre within the work-force that was opposed to trade unionism.¹¹ Soon enough the employers went further. As early as 1922, Reusch of the Gutehoffnungshütte (GHH) urged his south German subsidiary MAN to give financial support to the yellow (company) unions,¹² and in 1924 Vögler, a director of the United Steelworks, spoke openly in favour of company unions¹³ — a view supported by the conservative *Deutsche Zeitung*.¹⁴ By 1926, the heavy industrialists' stance had hardened further. Borsig advocated the waging of a 'defensive struggle' against the trade unions, while Thyssen claimed that at heart the workers were not interested in class politics — their souls were 'German'.¹⁵ Similar attitudes prevailed elsewhere, with the Hansa-Bund of north-west Germany arguing for the withdrawal of recognition for the trade unions¹⁶ and, as Preller observes, this increasingly common tone among employers 'finally led them away from their initial readiness to recognize the Weimar Republic and its class-based social policy'.¹⁷

Manufacturers and light industry in general took a somewhat less extreme line. Silverberg, for instance, expressed a preference for dealing with labour through the trade unions, rather than through company unions, and agreed that major macro-economic problems, especially the reparations question, had to be solved in conjunction with the unions.¹⁸ In pursuit of this partnership, Silverberg was prepared to accept the Weimar constitution, but only if it allowed the

employers to strengthen their position. And this indeed was the rub. There was no question of meeting the SPD and the unions on questions such as economic democratization — a sound entrepreneurial class was regarded as indispensable — and were the unions to accept co-operation on Silverberg's terms, they would effectively have had to abandon the class struggle.¹⁹ Silverberg received rather passive support from the chemical, electronic and exporting industries, but they were not a unified group and, in any case, tended to pursue a double strategy of co-operating with the unions after a fashion while working to undermine them through secret support for the yellow unions.²⁰ It could be argued that Silverberg was pursuing similar objectives to the heavy industrialists by more subtle means,²¹ but even this was too much for the latter. The western heavy industrialists were instrumental in successfully opposing him and, for instance, at a meeting of the Verband Mitteldeutscher Industrieller in April 1927, blocked attempts to recognize an active role for the unions in the economy.²²

There was also a widespread conviction within big-business circles, which had originated even before 1914,²³ that, specific disputes with the labour movement apart, economic growth and advancement provided a better guarantee of a sound social policy than did the allegedly ideologically-inspired and costly social policy legislation of the Weimar Republic.²⁴ It was in this unwelcoming atmosphere, coupled with mounting labour conflict in the Ruhr metallurgical and coal-mining industries,²⁵ that in 1928 the SPD and ADGB introduced plans for the democratization of the economy — the Naphtali Programme. Worker participation in the management of the economy was regarded by Naphtali as a vital incremental advance along the road to social ownership. As one might expect, many industrialists were enraged, seeing this programme as the prelude not only to economic disaster, but also to political catastrophe, as Germany's traditional leadership was replaced by a 'trade union élite', administering a centralized, monopolistic economy.²⁶

With prevention better than cure, heavy industry had launched its own campaign for the hearts and minds of the workers in May 1925 through the creation of the German Institute for Technical Labour Training, or Dinta. Working alongside the formally autonomous company unions and the nationalist leagues, Dinta was intended to overcome the alienation of most workers and salaried employees from their work at a time when a major rationalization drive was, in any case, demanding major changes in work practices and accompanying attitudes. Among the specific aims of Dinta, the training of

apprentices and young workers in company schools and sporting organizations, and the systematic education of workers in ‘economic’ thought and to accept the notion of the ‘company community’ (through the dissemination of works newspapers), were uppermost.²⁷ Although Dinta was, largely, aiming specifically at the young and the unorganized worker, this aim could potentially, as a contemporary observer noted, ‘deprive the working-class movement of its pool of recruits and drain it dry, slowly but surely, like water from a field’.²⁸

As the employers’ attitude to the Weimar settlement and to the direction of policy in Weimar hardened, a rather different process took place on the radical Right. The paramilitary leagues, which had assisted the early republican governments in their struggle against the revolutionary Left, only then to turn on the government itself, found their prospects much diminished in the more stable atmosphere of 1924 and after. The right-wing political parties and their trade union associates were increasingly prepared to work within the framework of the republican constitution after a fashion;²⁹ this led to increasing differences between themselves and the paramilitary leagues, which still believed they formed the cadre for a future revolutionary army. The government, too, became ever less prepared to tolerate paramilitary activity, especially by 1926, when it was regarded as prejudicial to an early withdrawal of the Inter-Allied Military Commission from Germany. The army, which in the early 1920s had utilized the paramilitary leagues as a frontier defence force on Germany’s eastern borders, also lost interest, as the threat of foreign invasion receded after the settlement of many outstanding difficulties between the Allies and Germany at Locarno in 1925.³⁰ The leagues responded by toning down their military–revolutionary stance and attempting to adopt a more ‘political’ and gradualist tone, but this was not particularly successful.³¹

The only league to retain its former significance during this period was the veterans’ association, the Stahlhelm. It had eschewed the openly putschist tactics of the more radical, *völkisch* leagues during the early 1920s but, even so, its paramilitary character was never in question and its anti-republicanism and opposition to reparations payments and to Locarno left it with credit on the far Right.³² The disappointed members of many smaller leagues now joined the Stahlhelm³³ and its ranks were further swollen by a recruitment drive among German youth. This began in late 1923 as relations with another league, the Wehrwolf, to which the Stahlhelm had initially left much youth recruitment, broke down, and the campaign was

undoubtedly a success. By 1928–9, around half the Stahlhelm's membership was of the post-war generation, which not only provided it with vital new blood, but simultaneously satisfied a desire in conservative circles for as many young Germans as possible in the largely disarmed republic to receive a military training, despite the provisions of the peace settlement.³⁴

These young Germans were recruited to an organization which saw itself as the peacetime embodiment of the 'front-line socialism' that had purportedly united Germans of every social and political background in the trenches of the Great War.³⁵ The Stahlhelm recognized that if such a spirit were to prevail in peacetime Germany, then the recruitment of workers and particularly working-class youth, which was very much exposed to Marxist influence, was especially important, and a variety of means were employed to achieve this.³⁶ In December 1924, the Stahlhelm established an Office for Social Policy, through which financial help and food were offered to those out of work. It also ran its own housing programme and, most telling of all, it provided an employment allocation service for its working-class members.³⁷ Employers were offered 'ideologically sound' workers just at a time when, as already seen, they were coming to regard the official unions with mounting disfavour. In these circumstances, the Stahlhelm's job allocation scheme was evidently a success.³⁸ The saying arose: 'If you're not in the Stahlhelm you won't get any sort of work',³⁹ and, indeed, even some local authorities, such as Potsdam, made Stahlhelm membership a precondition of appointment by 1929.⁴⁰

From 1925 onwards, the Stahlhelm developed links with like-minded employers' associations and with the company, or yellow, unions that were re-emerging as a minority presence in the factories at this time,⁴¹ and which could even discuss matters as specific as the breaking of strikes in a particular industry.⁴² In mid-1925, the Stahlhelm attempted unsuccessfully to establish its own yellow union, the Union of National German Workers,⁴³ but later, in 1928, it did form its own union organization, the Stahlhelm-Selbsthilfe (Stas). The Stas was essentially corporatist in outlook and sought to integrate the worker in his occupational estate by operating as a 'synthesis of the company union and the trade union'. In this way, the shared responsibility of employer and worker for the performance of any industry would eradicate the Marxist notion of class struggle. Indeed, the Stas consciously took on the official unions, which came to despise it as a strike-breaking organization,⁴⁴ but it was able gradually to gain ground in the small- and medium-sized firms of

central Germany and Berlin by the early 1930s, in the face of opposition from all other unions, including the nazi NSBO.⁴⁵

The KPD, therefore, witnessed a more aggressive attitude on the part of heavy industry and many smaller employers to labour relations and also saw the re-emergence of the yellow unions with considerable Stahlhelm involvement within them. To compound this, the KPD was suffering from the effects of a contradictory and self-destructive approach to factory politics which, compounded by official union hostility, had left it with a very weak trade union organization indeed.⁴⁶ This unpleasant situation was to make the KPD especially careful observers of the rise of the radical Right within the factories during the mid-1920s, and critical use of KPD sources from this period provides fresh perspectives on the state of labour relations during the mid-1920s.

The yellow unions had virtually disappeared by 1918, retaining only 46,000 members, but membership had recovered to 246,000 by 1921 — close to pre-war levels — and the yellow unions suffered proportionately less than other union groupings as overall membership declined in the wake of the 1923 upheavals in Germany. The ADGB dominated the German trade union movement, of course, with over four million members in 1925, and the Catholic unions retained almost 600,000 members. But then came the yellow unions with 188,000 members, followed by the liberal unions with 158,000 members and, finally, the communist and syndicalist unions with 64,000 members.⁴⁷ The latter grouping could count on substantial passive support in factory council elections in the centres of heavy industry but, even in the Ruhr mining district, a handful of yellow union delegates reappeared on the factory councils in 1924. Their eleven delegates might have appeared a pinprick when set against the 1,310 communist and syndicalist delegates (or the ten against 893 in 1925),⁴⁸ but the KPD regarded these tentative right-wing (or *völkisch*) successes as a portent of a greater danger, which arose out of social democracy's alleged betrayal of the working classes. This had produced a mood of apathy and even despair within sections of the working class, and those who were 'insufficiently class-conscious' had sometimes supported the superficially radical *völkisch* candidates rather than vote for the oppositional or openly communist candidates. The KPD acknowledged that the *völkisch* successes were isolated, but was convinced that they demonstrated 'the terrible danger into which the entire working-class movement could run

because of the passiveness of the reformist trade union bureaucracy'⁴⁹ and urged that a 'life and death struggle' be waged against the *Völkische*.⁵⁰

During 1925, the KPD's objective position weakened, while the far Right grew stronger. In July, the Red Front noted the increasing tendency of employers to recruit from within the right-wing leagues, thereby undermining the political cohesiveness of their work-forces. In the countryside matters were worse, for some estate owners made membership of a nationalist league a condition of employment.⁵¹ Even in the radical Ruhr district, the local Communist Party was concerned by the tendency of the far Right to switch the main basis of its activities from the street to the factory. With help from employers, nationalist workers and staff were present 'in almost all factories' and 'if our factory councillors and officials are not sufficiently alert, then one fine day we'll have the surprise of our lives'.⁵²

Specific mention of the Stahlhelm in this connection also became more common during 1925, whether it involved the body's growing influence among the rural working class, where the material benefits of Stahlhelm membership were often considerable,⁵³ or the Stahlhelm's presence in the factories. In the latter case, the communists were to approach the right-wingers man to man to discuss practical matters of common interest — a technique known as the United Front from Below tactic — so as 'to convince the misled workers in the Wehrwolf, the Stahlhelm and so on of the disgracefulness of their behaviour and to make them into class-conscious proletarians, marching in the Red Front'.⁵⁴ By the end of 1925, the national leadership of the Red Front considered matters to be particularly serious and the struggle against the nationalists on the land and in the factories became an issue of first-rate importance.⁵⁵ The Red Front believed that 'a large percentage of industrial and rural proletarians' were organized in the Stahlhelm and similar bodies, with young proletarians comprising 'a large proportion of the members of these organizations'. The best prospects for remedying this situation were seen to lie in the work-place, where these workers were free from their organizations and, given that many workers were more or less blackmailed by employers into joining nationalist leagues, this task was not seen as hopeless. 'Many workers who have to choose between unemployment or entry into the fascist organizations and work choose the latter out of necessity'.⁵⁶

During 1926, the Red Front in particular began to pay systematic attention to the nationalist leagues and their youth sections. The

arithmetic of the situation was not to the Red Front's liking, for it concluded that not only the republican paramilitary league, the Reichsbanner (with 3.5 million members) outnumbered it decisively, but also the nationalist leagues. The Stahlhelm alone was reckoned to have 400,000 to 500,000 members, to whom could be added the 200,000 or so members of other leagues,⁵⁷ as against the Red Front's membership of little over 100,000. The social composition of the right-wing leagues made matters worse. It is commonly assumed today that these leagues were overwhelmingly middle class, but the communist description of them as bourgeois applied to their political role, not their social composition. Thus, the Stahlhelm nationally was estimated by the KPD to be 80 per cent proletarian (as against an official Stahlhelm estimate of 88 per cent⁵⁸) and while this figure seems very high, an East German estimate sets the figure at 50 per cent⁵⁹ and it appears that the proportion of specifically industrial workers in the Stahlhelm in 1926 could indeed have approached 30 per cent.⁶⁰ To this would be added craft and agricultural workers and, since the presence of the latter in the Stahlhelm in large numbers is nowhere disputed, it seems probable that a majority of rank-and-file Stahlhelmer were indeed workers.

Looking specifically at the Right's appeal to youth, the Red Front reached even more depressing conclusions. The membership of left-wing youth organizations — political, cultural and sporting — was estimated at 700,000 to 800,000 as against the 3–3.5 million young workers in the bourgeois organizations.⁶¹ Elsewhere, the Red Front described a 'high proportion' of these 3.5 million as proletarian⁶² and looking specifically at the Young Stahlhelm, a claim of an 80 per cent proletarian membership was noted without comment.⁶³ Similarly, the leagues' women's groups had recruited a very high proportion of workers 'under the cloak of representing specifically women's interests of female workers'.⁶⁴ Whatever the exact figures, the Red Front was in no doubt that it faced an uphill task in organizing the mass of working-class youth, concluding: 'It is a fact that the majority of working-class youth is influenced by the bourgeoisie, even though we can establish that young workers belong to the most oppressed section of the proletariat as a whole'.⁶⁵

The Red Front claimed to detect a numerical decline in the Stahlhelm's strength in early 1926,⁶⁶ which was probably little more than wishful thinking,⁶⁷ but its belief that the Stahlhelm and other leagues suffered from considerable internal dissent was more soundly based.⁶⁸ As one might expect, the communist movement attributed

this dissent to increasing contradictions between the class interests of the Stahlhelm's leaders and their largely working-class following: 'The Stahlhelm cannot show its numerous proletarian members any escape from their economic predicament.'⁶⁹ This said, the Red Front's leaders had to admit that any such difficulties stemmed largely from the 'objective economic and political situation rather than any systematic, determined oppositional work by our organizations'.⁷⁰

In general terms, the Red Front conceded that the militaristic character of many right-wing organizations and their exploitation of 'war-romanticism' appealed strongly to many young workers, thereby weakening the Left still further domestically and, it was argued, producing prospective recruits for a war of intervention against the Soviet Union. The best counter to this appeared to lie in matching the Right's militarism within the Red Front and its youth wing, both to block off further recruitment by the Right of young workers and to win over individual working-class members of the leagues.⁷¹ In addition to militarism, it was recognized that nationalism had a great appeal even to proletarians 'and ties a section of them to the right-wing organizations'.⁷²

These problems apart, it seemed appropriate to use the 'United Front from Below' tactic to agitate among the rank-and-file members of the right-wing leagues to subvert and then detach them from their leaders and even their organizations.⁷³ The factories were perceived as a key area in this struggle for a variety of reasons. First, the KPD believed that the growth of yellow unions, or 'white factory cells' as it called them, had reached serious proportions. Again the Stahlhelm emerges as a decisive factor, for whatever internal problems this organization might have suffered, it constituted 'a dangerous opponent in the realm of economic struggle as one of the principal advocates of the white factory cells'.⁷⁴ These cells were becoming stronger and more numerous, particularly in the mining and smelting industries, where foremen and older workers were active in their organizations.⁷⁵ The ideal response lay in organizing all workers within the trade unions and then setting up red factory cells within these,⁷⁶ but this was hardly realistic. None the less, the factory was considered the ideal environment for approaching right-wingers simply because it was there that communists and, for instance, Stahlhelmer came into daily contact and shared similar concerns. There were also instances when Red Youth Front formations came upon Young Stahlhelm groups during camping trips and tried to proselytize the latter on the basis of their common class interests. However, discussions organization to

organization were never going to succeed as well as ‘discussion with the individual man at the work bench’.⁷⁷ Similarly, the unemployment offices, public transport and public parks provided opportunities for approaching right-wing workers and discussing a range of specific issues, of which the nationalist leagues’ attitude to economic crises was regarded as the most important.⁷⁸ As the Red Front in Württemberg demanded publicly of its members:

The working-class elements of the fascist organisations [. . .] demand a particular attitude of every comrade. Try to convince them by matter-of-fact discussion, don’t lump them together with their leaders. We must fight for the soul of every proletarian who still stands apart from us or who is actually hostile. A good measure of patience is necessary here. Remember, even we once belonged somewhere different from today politically.⁷⁹

During 1926, therefore, the German communist movement had committed itself to combating the Right in the factories in large measure through proselytization and personal contacts. The growing strength of the Right, which was ‘much better organized, much better armed, and operating in a much more unified fashion [than hitherto]’⁸⁰ had made physical confrontation impractical.

The communist movement’s counter-measures failed to contain, let alone eradicate, right-wing influence within the industrial working class and during 1927 concern consequently mounted. The employers themselves had been far from idle. Ninety-five firms in the iron and coal-mining industry had Dinta schools, as against twenty-three in 1926,⁸¹ and dozens of firms had begun to distribute Dinta works newspapers,⁸² against which the KPD had little answer. The factory council election results began to reinforce the impression of communist impotence as against an incipient right-radical threat. Thus, in the mining industry the yellow unions received 41 mandates (0.63 per cent) in 1925, but 90 mandates (1.4 per cent) in 1927. The communist union received 845 mandates (12.99 per cent) in 1925, but then collapsed and received none in 1927. The Syndicalists failed to benefit from this disaster with their tally of mandates declining from 75 in 1925 to 49 in 1927, well below the figure for the yellow unions.⁸³ In the metal industry, the yellow unions received 1,097 mandates in 1925 (4.1 per cent thereof) and 1,350 mandates in 1927 (5 per cent) while the combined communist and Syndicalist tally declined from 126 (0.5 per cent) in 1925 to 94 (0.4 per cent) in 1927.⁸⁴

Leaving aside factory elections, the bourgeois women’s organizations were recruiting proletarian members through the offer of

jobs, by arranging discounts on the purchase of groceries and household articles, and by dispensing charity. The Red Women's and Girls' League feared that, once recruited in this way, working-class women could be indoctrinated with bourgeois values and come to perceive themselves as mothers and home-makers in the first instance. The League was to prevent women from joining bourgeois organizations and win over for the class struggle those proletarians who had already joined them.⁸⁵

This implicit criticism of the KPD's women's work was eclipsed by that of the movement's youth campaign. The latter had been designated as a priority, indeed as the priority at the Red Front's Third National Congress in March 1926, but with little to show for this. As the Fourth National Congress lamented in March 1927: 'It is indeed a farce that we speak of the struggle against fascism and imperialist war while we simultaneously leave the young proletarians to the bourgeois paramilitary leagues without a serious struggle and deliver them up to nationalist indoctrination of the very worst sort.'⁸⁶ The Young Red Front concluded, not unreasonably, that it had a lot to learn from its more successful right-wing rivals: 'With regard to our campaigning methods, we should learn in particular from rival organizations and reflect over why the greater part of the young proletariat stands on the side of the class enemy.' In so doing, the Young Red Front observed that the romanticism of young people and their wish for comradeship were of great importance. The rambles, scouting, and camping activities of the right-wing leagues held a great attraction for young workers and, therefore, had to be copied by the Young Red Front.⁸⁷ The first attempts at this in northern Germany did enjoy some success and were soon extended to the southern states.⁸⁸

However, recreational activities were also used specifically by the Right to achieve rapid and effective penetration of factory workforces. In the Ruhr, for instance, the Red Front and Young Red Front had become well established, but the same was true of the Stahlhelm, not least because of its sporting activities. 'There are a very large number of factories there in which up to 70 per cent of the workers are organized in "factory sporting clubs" set up by the Stahlhelm,' a delegate to a KPD conference in Stuttgart reported. Of course, most of these workers did not join the Stahlhelm itself, even if its sporting activities and job allocation service did bring it 'a large number of members in the Ruhr District'. None the less, its potential ability to influence large numbers of workers over and above its

paid-up membership in Germany's industrial heartland clearly worried the Red Front.⁸⁹

Indeed, the communist movement remained convinced that the major right-wing leagues derived much of their numerical strength from recruitment within the working classes. The Stahlhelm — almost half a million strong — was taken to be 65 per cent industrial and rural proletarian in 1927, with 25 per cent of its membership from the lower-middle classes and 10 per cent (the leaders) from the bourgeoisie. Of the smaller leagues, the Wehrwolf, with perhaps 100,000 members, was considered even more proletarian: 75–80 per cent workers, 15–20 per cent lower-middle class and with a scattering of bourgeois members.⁹⁰ This resulted partly from a Wehrwolf policy, applied particularly in central Germany, to recruit workers only, and partly from the extremely radical stance adopted by some Wehrwolf leaders. Thus, in the left-wing stronghold of Hamburg, the Wehrwolf alone of the leagues had recruited a sizeable membership of 900, precisely because of this radicalism. The Jungdo, although more lower-middle class, attracting many shop assistants and clerical workers, still apparently drew between 30 and 40 per cent of its members from the working class.⁹¹

This disturbing pattern was accentuated by the organization of many of these workers within company unions. The Stahlhelm had won 'substantial influence in important large factories in the Ruhr District' by February 1927, and had also gained support in the middle Rhine lignite fields, and in the industrial towns of the Erzgebirge/Vogtland and Silesia.⁹² By mid-summer, the Red Front possessed somewhat more detailed information on the Stahlhelm and other leagues which identified Halle-Merseburg, Baden-Pfalz, the Ruhr District and some towns near Berlin as centres of strength for their company unions, although it confessed that its information 'did not in the slightest way provide a picture of the extent of factory fascism in Germany'.⁹³ None the less, it was now able to identify some individual factories where the Stahlhelm had established unions, such as the huge Leuna chemical works, with a payroll of 48,000 workers, which contained a 400-strong Stahlhelm union, and the sugar refinery in Halle with 480 of its 600 workers so organized. These two factories were among forty in Halle-Merseburg with Stahlhelm unions with an overall membership of perhaps 4,000. In the Ruhr District, the Gelsenkirchener Mining Company was identified as a Stahlhelm stronghold with 500 members⁹⁴ and overall the Red Front was able to identify 25 nationalist company unions in 19 separate

towns. Mines such as the Zeche Gustav (with 90 out of 1,800 employees so organized), the Zeche Brassert (300 out of 2,800) and the Zeche Dahlbusch (300 out of 5,500) were joined by the iron works of Schildte and Knaudel (263 out of 1,600) and the zinc smelter in Hamborn (100).⁹⁵ Subsequent East German research shows this list merely to scratch the surface. Key enterprises in Berlin, such as Siemens and AEG, in Chemnitz, such as Wanderer Werken and Vomag, in the Ruhr, such as Krupp and Thyssen, and other factories throughout Germany, including the Opel Werke in Rüsselsheim, had Stahlhelm groups.⁹⁶ Thus can be understood Kaasch's report to the Comintern in May 1927 that: 'The big factories are dominated above all by the SPD, followed by the Centre Party or the Fascists, especially the Stahlhelm.'⁹⁷

However, the factory council election results revealed the limitations, and potential weakness of these company unions. In the Leuna works, it is true, the Stahlhelm union gained 1,500 votes in the 1927 elections, which comfortably exceeded its 400-strong membership, but in many factories the vote for the 'yellow' candidate was well below the strength of the company union, especially in the Ruhr District. Of the 500 Stahlhelmer employed at the Gelsenkirchener Mining Company, only 54 voted for their candidate in a shop steward's election, and in factory council elections the proportions were 137 out of 300 at the Dahlbusch mine and 25 out of 100 at the Hamborn zinc smelter.⁹⁸ Many workers evidently had divided political loyalties, not least because of the ways in which the Stahlhelm had gained a foothold in the factories.

Leaving aside the convinced Stahlhelmer, some workers evidently joined to acquire various material benefits that membership of a company union could bring. In secret ballots, it seems, they hedged their bets by choosing non-yellow (presumably socialist) candidates to represent their interests as workers within privately owned and managed companies and therefore got the best of both worlds. The communists' self-perceived task in these circumstances — however dubious the tactic might now seem — was to appeal to their sense of class solidarity, 'so that they return to the ranks of the class-conscious workers and rejoin their organizations'.⁹⁹ In the countryside in particular, employers could force workers into the Stahlhelm through 'economic terror', giving employees the stark choice of remaining in their job (and quite possibly retaining tied or rented accommodation) or refusing to join the Stahlhelm and thereby losing everything.¹⁰⁰ No doubt the victims of such tactics were the most likely to assume a split

political identity: belonging to a right-wing organization while voting Left, but open defiance of their employers' wishes would hardly have been a practical option, rendering the communists' task very difficult.

As well as influencing, or coercing, existing work-forces, employers and company unions had the option of reconstituting work-forces to their liking. Even in stable economic times older workers retire and are replaced by the young, but during the mid-1920s there was a particularly high turnover of labour. New employees were taken on in the wake of the 1923–4 economic crisis, but unemployment rose sharply in 1926 before falling equally sharply in 1927. Coupled with the intense rationalization drive within German industry, employers were given ample opportunity for changing the composition of their work-forces quite dramatically. As intimated earlier, the Stahlhelm offered employers the chance of appointing politically reliable workers through its job allocation scheme and it appears that many took advantage of this.¹⁰¹ In some cases, the KPD observed, hand-picked Stahlhelmer were transported across Germany to work in particular factories from which the employers sought to remove radical workers, as in the case of the Knorr Bremse works in Berlin in September 1927; in more general terms, the build-up of company unions was regarded as 'an important instrument for corrupting part of the working class, for undermining the Free Trade Unions, and for driving revolutionary influence out of the factories'.¹⁰²

From time to time, the KPD spoke of driving the 'fascists' from the factories in co-operation with the official unions but, given their own weakness, their poor relations with the ADGB, and the glaring reality of the powers employers enjoyed in appointing and dismissing their employees, this was little more than rhetoric. As in 1926, the only realistic course open to the KPD was to take advantage of the many opportunities for personal contact between communist and nationalist workers to try to convince them to change sides.¹⁰³ 'It is necessary to make these people aware of their duties as members of the proletariat. If they are handled properly, many of them will come back to where they belong.'¹⁰⁴ The immediate objective remained to persuade converts, while staying in their original organizations, to proselytize among their comrades and to provide the communist movement with intelligence information. Public entry into the Red Front (which was in any case theoretically open to the members of all parties)¹⁰⁵ was regarded as a last resort when membership of the Stahlhelm, or another group, became impossible.¹⁰⁶

As was so often the case, the communist movement's ambitious plans were not transformed into deeds. In July, the Red Front's leadership complained that with the exception of the Berlin and Halle-Merseburg districts, organized work among rival bodies — the Reichsbanner included — had been largely absent.¹⁰⁷ The Red Front was urged to repair the damage, but reports for 1928 show a remarkably similar pattern. There were periodic reports of crises in the Stahlhelm, not least because of its strike-breaking activities in a year of mounting industrial unrest which caused many workers to leave it, but, as the Red Front's leaders complained: 'Where has this favourable situation been exploited for us by the comrades of our District Organizations?'¹⁰⁸ At its Fifth National Congress, the Red Front's leaders complained yet again at the lack of effective intelligence work on the Right's activities in the factories — no doubt in part because of the KPD's own organizational weakness there:¹⁰⁹ 'Reports on the strength and activities of the fascists in the factories are very deficient, with the result that detailed figures on the activities of company unions and other fascist factory organizations cannot be given.'¹¹⁰ Working-class youth remained at risk and yet the communist movement had still failed to take on the nationalist sporting organizations or to counter the militaristic stance of the nationalist leagues. 'We must not ignore the fact that the bourgeoisie's nationalist war propaganda is often successful among the uninformed proletarian youth, all the more so because today's youth has no longer directly experienced a war.'¹¹¹ The situation was not hopeless. The Red Front claimed to have restricted the growth of factory fascism in the Ruhr, although this must be taken on trust and even the Red Front admitted that the area remained a stronghold of the same, even if a combination of sabotage, physical confrontation and united front tactics towards the Stahlhelm and other groups could sometimes disrupt the latter or even win over members from them.¹¹² However, one is left finally with the impression that the KPD had been confronted by an unwelcome new dimension to its struggle against the Right of whose importance it was in little doubt, but against which its countermeasures were of limited value.

The Stahlhelm, and the yellow unions more generally, failed in their immediate objective and, therefore, failed to fulfil the hopes some heavy industrialists had vested in them. The organizational strength and cohesiveness of the Free Trade Unions — the ADGB —

remained largely unimpaired until the major recession of the years 1929–32 made its mark. That said, the reappearance of company unions cannot be dismissed as insignificant.¹¹³ The banning of the *Stahlhelm* in Westphalia and the Rhine Province did nothing to help, but the same year saw a key breakthrough. The Reich Labour Court gave qualified recognition of Company Unions' capacity to conduct collective bargaining, contrary to the spirit and intention of Weimar legislation, while denying communist unions the same right in a judgement in 1930.¹¹⁴ But well before the 1929 slump, key sections of heavy industry were prepared to use company unions as a weapon in their struggle to undermine the gains achieved by organized labour in 1918. This went as far as their using the *Stahlhelm*'s job allocation service to recruit purportedly 'patriotic' workers to replace potential left-wing trouble-makers within their factories, and it is clear that this strategy started long before the mass unemployment of the early 1930s made its execution very much easier. Ironically, the 'stabilization' of the Weimar Republic during the mid-1920s helped make this feasible for, with the clampdown on open paramilitary activity by the state, radical right-wingers had turned their attention to the workshops and factories of Germany.

Equally significant were the implications of this process for the political and social future of the German working class. As has been shown, the KPD was particularly concerned. It had pinned its revolutionary hopes during this period on organizing and mobilizing the factory-employed proletariat which, given its organizational weakness in the factories, would have been a daunting task under any circumstances. However, at least the ADGB could be regarded as a relatively passive target which also had few friends among the employers and the wider establishment. The KPD argued, not without reason, that many ordinary trade unionists were more radical than their leaders and might, therefore, under suitable circumstances, be won over to the revolutionary cause.

The yellow unions, and the considerable *Stahlhelm* involvement in them, posed completely different problems for the revolutionary movement. Not only were they working hand in glove with the employers and with the *Dint*, but were regarded as a new and highly threatening dynamic. Although they had failed to neutralize the reformist unions they, and more particularly their sporting and leisure auxiliaries, had received a disturbing degree of support from individual workers, including many in Germany's industrial heartlands. Before 1930 this was manifested largely through membership

of auxiliary organizations, but in 1930 and 1931 began to translate into votes in factory council elections — notably in mining and chemicals.¹¹⁵ This demonstrated the opportunism (or fearful impotence) of many employees and, as was shown, revealed the ability of individual workers to wear two or more political hats. This lays open to question the degree to which individual workers can necessarily be labelled as ‘patriotic’, ‘socialist’, ‘Tory’, etc. and suggests that apparent shifts in formal political allegiance on the part of individuals were not necessarily so very dramatic. The ‘change’ might have involved stressing one part of their political persona at the expense of another.

As the KPD understood, this called into question the prospects for the revolutionary movement within the factories. It would enter the depression years weak and isolated while the radical Right had, even during the relatively stable 1920s, begun to undermine the apparent coherence of the labour force which the unions had, painfully, attempted to forge out of the 1918 agreements with the employers. These radical right-wingers did not necessarily serve as the forerunners of nazism in any direct sense. There is no direct evidence that the nazi trade union, the NSBO, drew its main working-class strength from these yellow unions during the early 1930s, despite contacts between the two sides,¹¹⁶ for the membership of the latter remained more or less stable at that time and their vote in factory council elections tended to rise.¹¹⁷ However, it seems clear that the nazi movement did not face quite the monolith in its bid for factory working-class support that has sometimes been suggested, for the edifice had already been fractured during Weimar’s ‘Golden Years’.

Notes

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1. For a specific discussion of Company Unions see K.J. Mattheier, ‘Werkvereine und wirtschaftsfriedlich-nationale (gelbe) Arbeiterbewegung im Ruhrgebiet’ in J. Reulecke (ed.), *Arbeiterbewegung an Rhein und Ruhr* (Wuppertal 1974), 173–204. See also: I. Hamel, *Völkischer Verband und nationale Gewerkschaft: Der DHV 1893–1933* (Frankfurt 1967) and A. Stupperich, *Volksgemeinschaft oder Arbeitersolidarität: Studien zur Arbeitnehmerpolitik in der Deutschnationalen Volkspartei 1918–1933* (Göttingen 1982).

2. A number of such articles appeared in the ADGB’s journal, *Die Arbeit*, between

1924 and 1928.

3. Cf. Mattheier, op. cit., 174 and M. Schneider, *Unternehmer und Demokratie. Die freien Gewerkschaften in der Unternehmer Ideologie der Jahre 1918 bis 1933* (Bonn-Bad Godesberg 1975), 33–7.

4. Mattheier, op. cit., 177–8.

5. U. Nocken, 'Corporatism and Pluralism in Modern German History' in D. Stegmann, B.-J. Wendt and P.-C. Witt (eds), *Industrielle Gesellschaft und Politisches System. Beiträge zur politischen Sozialgeschichte* (Bonn 1978), 47.

6. Mattheier, op. cit., 193–9.

7. G.D. Feldman, 'The large firm in the German Industrial System: The M.A.N. 1900–1925' in D. Stegmann, B.-J. Wendt, P.-C. Witt (eds), op. cit., 249. L. Preller, *Sozialpolitik in der Weimarer Republik* (Düsseldorf 1978), 202.

8. Schneider, op. cit., 37–42.

9. Cf. E.V. Schöck, *Arbeitslosigkeit und Rationalisierung. Die Lage der Arbeiter und die kommunistische Gewerkschaftspolitik 1920–28* (Frankfurt/Main 1977), 99.

10. Feldman, op. cit., 256; H. Mommsen, 'Sozialpolitik im Ruhrbergbau' in H. Mommsen, D. Petzina and B. Weisbrod (eds), *Industrielles System und politische Entwicklung in der Weimarer Republik* (Düsseldorf 1977), vol. 1, 307–8, 315; Preller, op. cit., 202; Schneider, op. cit., 42–9.

11. Mattheier, op. cit., 200–1.

12. Feldman, op. cit., 256.

13. Hamel, op. cit., 208.

14. Ibid., 211.

15. Preller, op. cit., 201, 203. Cf B. Weisbrod, *Schwerindustrie in der Weimarer Republik. Interessenpolitik zwischen Stabilisierung und Krise* (Wuppertal 1978), 259–63.

16. Preller, op. cit., 201.

17. Ibid., 203. This had implications for all the trade unions, including the more right-wing and the white-collar organizations, cf Hamel, op. cit., 203–4 and Mattheier, op. cit., 203–4.

18. Schneider, op. cit., 69.

19. Nocken, op. cit., 50; Schneider, op. cit., 70; Weisbrod, op. cit., 246–50.

20. Schneider, op. cit., 70–1; Weisbrod, op. cit., 251–68.

21. Cf Weisbrod, op. cit., 269–70.

22. Nocken, op. cit., 51; Weisbrod, op. cit., 269.

23. Mattheier, op. cit., 177.

24. G.D. Feldman, 'The Social and Economic Policies of German Big Business, 1918–1929', *American Historical Review*, LXXV (1969), passim; Preller, op. cit., 200.

25. Feldman, op. cit., 53; Mommsen, op. cit., 316–18; Schneider, op. cit., 76–85.

26. J.A. Moses, *Trade Unionism in Germany from Bismarck to Hitler 1869–1933*, vol. 2 (Totowa, NJ 1982), 359–62, 366–70. Cf Schneider, op. cit., 75 and 85–92.

27. Schöck, op. cit., 109–10. Cf Mattheier, op. cit., 178–92 on comparable developments before the first world war.

28. F. Fricke, *Sie Suchen die Seele!* (Berlin 1927), 30. Cf Schneider, op. cit., 73–4.

29. Even the DNVP's white-collar union, the DHV recognized, with reservations, the need to work within the framework of Weimar. Hamel, op. cit., 184–7, 195–6; Preller, op. cit., 191–2.

30. J.M. Diehl, *Paramilitary politics in Weimar Germany* (Bloomington and London 1977), 152, 188–9, 202–3.

31. Ibid., ch. 5.

32. Cf. E. Posse, *Die politischen Kampfbünde Deutschlands* (Berlin 1930), 26–7.
33. A. Rosenberg, *Geschichte der Weimarer Republik* (Frankfurt-am-Main 1980), 171–2; Posse, op. cit., 23.
34. Diehl, op. cit., 171; A. Klotzbücher, 'Der politische Weg des Stahlhelm, Bund der Frontsoldaten, in der Weimarer Republik. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der "Nationalen Opposition" 1918–1933 (Inaugural Dissertation, Friedrich-Alexander-Universität, Erlangen-Nürnberg 1965), 42.
35. K. Finker, 'Die militärischen Wehrverbände in der Weimarer Republik und ihre Rolle bei der Unterdrückung der Arbeiterklasse und bei der Verbreitung eines neuen imperialistischen Krieges (1924–1929)' (Habilitationsschrift, Pädagogische Hochschule, Potsdam 1964), 147–9.
36. Cf. Klotzbücher, op. cit., 44 n. 43; Posse, op. cit., 29–30.
37. Finker, op. cit., 143; V.R. Berghahn, *Der Stahlhelm, Bund der Frontsoldaten 1918–1935* (Düsseldorf 1966), 107; Diehl, op. cit., 174 and 349 n. 71; Klotzbücher, op. cit., 44; Posse, op. cit., 31.
38. Cf. Preller, op. cit., 196; O.E. Schüddekopf, *Linke Leute von Rechts. Die national-revolutionären Minderheiten und der Kommunismus in der Weimarer Republik* (Stuttgart 1960), 206.
39. Klotzbücher, op. cit., 44.
40. Finker, op. cit., 161.
41. See Mattheier, op. cit., 202–3.
42. Diehl, op. cit., 349 n. 71; Preller, op. cit., 196; Finker, op. cit., 159–60.
43. Finker, op. cit., 159–60.
44. Even the DHV, as a right-wing white-collar union, accused the yellow unions in general of 'selling out to the employers'. Hamel, op. cit., 199, 201–2.
45. Klotzbücher, op. cit., 45–6.
46. J. Degras (ed.), *The Communist International 1919–1943*, vol. II (London 1973), 207; B. Fowkes, *Communism in Germany in the Weimar Republic* (London 1984), 138; R.N. Hunt, *German Social Democracy 1918–1933* (Chicago 1970), 169; Moses, *Trade Unionism*, vol. 2, 439 n. 77; Preller, op. cit., 204.
47. Preller, op. cit., 204. Reich estimates yellow union membership in late 1930 as 193,340. N. Reich, *Labour Relations in Republican Germany* (New York 1938), 80.
48. Moses, *Trade Unionism*, vol. 2, 439 n. 77.
49. Staatsarchiv Bremen (hereafter SB) 4,65/289/57, 'Völkische Betriebsräte. Zum Wahlergebnis in der Knorr-Bremse', *Rote Fahne*, Nr 13, 15 March 1924. See also: SB 4,65/268/51, 'Die völkischen Kampfgewerkschaften', *Mitteilungs-Blatt der Gewerkschaftsopposition*, Nr. 4/5, 20 March 1924, 10–11.
50. SB 4,65/268/51, 'Die völkischen Kampfgewerkschaften', *Mitteilungs-Blatt der Gewerkschaftsopposition*, Nr. 4/5, 20 March 1924, 11.
51. SB 4,65/1246/207, 'Arbeitsnachweise der Reaktion', *Rote Front*, Nr. 6, 1 July 1925.
52. SB 4,65/239/42. Abschrift. Bezirk Ruhrgebiet Polbüro. Tgb. Nr.1/1733. 1925, Essen, 1 Aug. 1925, 3.
53. SB 4,65/1256/209. Anlage zum Lagebericht Nr. 24 v. 1.7.25 der Pol. Präsid. Stuttgart. Protokoll der 2. Reichskonferenz des R.F.B. am 22. und 23. Mai in Berlin, 10. SB 4,65/1246/207. Auszug aus dem Lagebericht W.36 des Pol. Präsid. Stuttgart vom 21.10.25. Rundschreiben der Bundesleitung des RFB., Nr. 22/25. Berlin, 2 October 1925.
54. SB 4,65/1246/207. 'Arbeitsnachweise der Reaktion', *Rote Front*, Nr. 6, 1 July 1925.
55. SB 4,65/1246/207. Abschrift. Bundesleitung des RFB. An sämtliche Ortsgruppen

des RFB. Berlin, 30 November 1925, 2–3. Cf. the more sanguine assessment of the situation in Daycock, 'The KPD and the NSDAP: A Study of the Relationship between Political Extremes in Weimar Germany 1923–1933' (PhD Dissertation, London School of Economics 1980), 133.

56. SB 4,65/1246/207 as in note above.

57. SB 4,65/1262/210. Auszug aus dem Bericht d. Min. des Innern Dresden vom 20.12.26, Anlage 1, 3. Cf. Diehl, op. cit., 293–5; Posse, op. cit., 23.

58. SB 4,65/1262/210. Auszug aus dem Bericht d. Min. des Innern Dresden vom 20.12.26, Anlage 1, 3.

59. Finker, op. cit., 112.

60. Klotzbücher, op. cit., 43–4. Cf. Posse, op. cit., 31, who gives qualified acceptance to a figure of 65 per cent working-class overall.

61. SB 4,65/1258/210. Auszug aus dem Lagebericht W9 des Pol. Präsidiums Stuttgart vom 3.3.26. Referenten-Material für Mitgliederversammlungen des RFB und der RJ. III.

62. SB 4,65/1256/209. Abschrift. Der Polizeipräsident zu Hannover. Nr. I.P. 329. N. Stelle Nr. 1012/26 geh. 9 April 1926. Abschrift. Jungfront Bericht . . . II.

63. SB 4,65/1258/210. Der Oberpräsident der Provinz Westfalen. No. 1411/26 III M. Betrifft: Richtlinien für die Organisierung der Arbeit unter den gegnerischen Jugendorganisationen . . . 19 Aug. 1926.

64. SB 4,65/1254/209. Polizeidirektion. N-Stelle Nr. 270/26. Betr.: Roter Frauen- und Mädchen-Bund. Bremen, 28 January 1926. Abschrift. Richtlinien des Roten Frauenbundes. 1. Zweck und Aufgaben . . .

65. SB 4,65/1258/210 as in note 61.

66. SB 4,65/1262/210. Auszug aus dem Bericht d. Min. des Innern Dresden vom 20.12.26. Anlage 1, 2.

67. Cf. Diehl, op. cit., 219–22; Rosenberg, op. cit., 171–2.

68. Cf. Diehl, op. cit., 222.

69. SB 4,65/1262/210. Auszug aus dem Bericht d. Min. des Innern Dresden vom 20.12.26. Anlage 1, 2.

70. Ibid., 1.

71. SB 4,65/1258/210. Auszug aus dem Lagebericht W9 des Pol. Präsidiums Stuttgart vom 3.3.26. Referenten-Material für Mitgliederversammlungen des RFB und der RJ. {---}, Einleitung und VI.

72. SB 4,65/1262/210. Auszug aus dem Bericht d. Min. des Innern Dresden vom 20.12.26. Anlage 1, 9.

73. SB 4,65/1258/210 as in note 71; SB 4,65/1262/210 as in note 72. Cf. Bahne, *KPD*, 22. Degras, op. cit., 72 and 88; Fowkes, op. cit., 130.

74. SB 4,65/1262/210. Auszug aus dem Bericht d. Min. des Innern Dresden vom 20.12.26. Anlage 1, 3.

75. Bundesarchiv Koblenz (hereafter BA) R134/56 (148). Reichskommissar für Überwachung der öffentlichen Ordnung (hereafter Rko) Nr. 3199/26II. Berlin, 23 April 1926.

76. SB 4,65/1256/209. 'Unsere Gegner', *Rote Front*, early April 1926.

77. SB 4,65/1247/207. Polizeidirektions N-Stelle B. Nr. 428/27. Abschrift. RFB Abtl. Rote Jungfront Gau Nordwest. Bremen, 14 May 1926, 4.

78. SB 4,65/1262/210. Auszug aus dem Bericht d. Min. des Innern Dresden vom 20.12.26. Anlage 1, 8–9. SB 4,65/1256/209. Abschrift. Der Polizeipräsident zu Hannover. Nr. I.P. 329. N. Stelle Nr. 1012/26 geh. Hannover, 9 April 1926. Abschrift.

Jungfront Bericht {---} II.

79. SB 4,65/1262/210. Auszug aus einem Rundschreiben des R.F.B. Gauleitung Württemberg vom 7.9.1926. Diess. B. Nr. 2495/26 geh. (3).

80. SB 4,65/242/43. Entnommen aus dem Lagebericht Nr. 25 vom 8. Sept. 1926 des Pol. Präsidiums Elberfeld-Barmen. N. Stelle B. Nr. 2355/26 geh. {---} Vom ZK der KPD aufgestellte Richtlinien, II, 4.

81. Schöck, op. cit., 110.

82. Ibid.

83. Schöck, op. cit., 250–1, table 18.

84. Here the yellow vote had, in fact, peaked in 1926 before the metalworkers' dispute. Schöck, op. cit., 256–7, table 23.

85. SB 4,65/1254/209. Auszug aus dem Lagebericht Januar 1927 des Pol. Prä. Abtl. I.A. Berlin. Roter Frauen- und Mädchenbund. 81. I.A. Allgem. 26. Anlage 1, 5.

86. SB 4,65/1256/209. 'Unsere 4. Reichskonferenz', *Rote Front*, Nr. 6, 15 March 1927. See also: SB 4,65/1258/210. Auszug aus dem Dresdener Lagebericht IPN 600/27 vom 14.3.27. *Rote Jungfront*.

87. SB 4,65/1249/207. Der Oberpräsident der Provinz Westfalen. Nr. 341/27 III M. Münster, 8 April 1927. Abschrift. Allgemeine Richtlinien für das Lagerleben der Roten Jungfront.

88. SB 4,65/1249/207. Auszug aus dem Stuttgarter Lagebericht W.13 vom 30.3.27. Mitgliederversammlung des RFB.

89. Ibid.

90. BA R134/33 (7 and 10) Rko In. Nr. 121. Berlin, 28 March 1927 Strafsache Otto Braun. Beschlagnahmtes Material. IV. Cf. Finker, op. cit., 327 who estimates a membership of 50,000 which was 70 per cent working-class.

91. BA R134/33 (9 and 10). Rko In. Nr. 121 as above, and Finker, op. cit., 328.

92. SB 4,65/1249/207. Abschrift. Bundesführung des RFB. Rundschreiben Nr. 5/27. Berlin, 18 February 1927. III. Reichstreffen 1927 in Berlin, 1–2. SB 4,65/1248/207. Abschrift Bundesführung RFB. Rundschreiben Nr. 4/27. Berlin, 29 January 1927, 9.

93. SB 4,65/1262/210. Entnommen aus dem L.B. Nr. 7/27 des Pol. Prä. Hannover. N. Stelle B. Nr. 2026/27. Anlage 1. Berlin, mid-July 1927.

94. The same company reportedly also had a strong Wehrwolf presence, with perhaps 70 per cent of the work-force so organized. Finker, op. cit., 327.

95. SB 4,65/1262/210 as in note 93.

96. Finker, op. cit., 159–60.

97. Fowkes, op. cit., 174.

98. SB 4,65/1262/210 as in note 93.

99. Ibid.

100. SB 4,65/1249/207. Abschrift. Bundesführung des RFB. Rundschreiben Nr. 5/27. Berlin 18 February 1927. III. Reichstreffen 1927 in Berlin, 1–2. BA R134/33(8). Rko In. Nr. 121. Berlin, 28 March 1927. Strafsache Otto Braun. Beschlagnahmtes Material IV. Cf. Posse, op. cit., 31.

101. BA R134/33(8) Rko In. Nr. 121. Berlin, 28 March 1927. Strafsache Otto Braun. Beschlagnahmtes Material IV. Cf. SB 4,65/1248/207. Abschrift. Bundesführung RFB. Rundschreiben Nr. 4/27. Berlin, 29 January 1927, 9.

102. SB 4,65/245/44. 'Stahlhelm-Streikbrecher nach Berlin', *Rote Fahne*, Nr. 218, 16 Sept. 1927. SB 4,65/1249/207. Abschrift. Bundesführung des RFB Rundschreiben Nr. 5/27. Berlin, 18 February 1927. III. Reichstreffen 1927 in Berlin, 2.

103. SB 4,65/244/44 as in note 102. SB 4,65/1248/207. Abschrift. Bundesführung

RFB. Rundschreiben Nr. 4/27. Berlin, 29 January 1927, 9. SB 4,65/1248/207. Polizeidirektion: N-Stelle B. Nr. 22/27. Abschrift. Der Aufbau des Gegner-Ressorts im RFB Bremen, 11 January 1927, 4–5.

104. SB 4,65/244/44. Ausschnitt aus einem Lagebericht aus Stuttgart vom 4.5.27. W17 N. Stelle No. 967/27 geh. Kommunistische Parteiarbeiterversammlung.

105. SB 4,65/1249/207. 'Was will der Rote Frontkämpferbund?', *Rote Fahne*, Nr. 124, 28 May 1927.

106. SB 4,65/1248/207. Polizeidirektion: N-Stelle B. Nr. 22/27. Abschrift. Der Aufbau des Gegner-Ressorts in RFB Bremen, 11 January 1927, 4–5.

107. SB 4,65/1262/210. Entnommen aus dem L.B. Nr. 7/27 des Pol. Präs. Hannover. N. Stelle B. Nr. 2026/27. Anlage 1. Berlin, mid-July 1927.

108. SB 4,65/1251/208. Entnommen aus dem Monatsbericht 3/1928 des Polizei-Präs. Hannover, N. Stelle Nr. 476/28 geh. Berlin, 30 Jan. 1928. Abschrift! Anlage 2. BA R134/39 (83–84). Rko In. 125. Berlin, 14 April 1928.

109. C. Fischer, 'The KPD and Nazism: A Reply to Dick Geary', *European History Quarterly*, 15 (1985), 467.

110. BA R134/39 (45). Rko. In. 125. Berlin, 14 April 1928. Anlage 1b.

111. SB 4,65/1259/210. Auszug aus dem Lagebericht W.9 des Pol. Präsidiums Stuttgart vom 29.2.28. J.Nr. 421/28 geh. Rundschreiben der Bundesführung des RFB Abt. Rote Jungfront. BA R134/39 (91). Rko In. 125. Berlin, 14 April 1928. Abschrift.

112. BA R134/39 (111). Rko In. 125. Berlin, 14 April 1928. Abschrift. SB 4,65/1262/210. Auszug aus dem Lagebericht Nr. 134/II 28 vom 11/9 1928 der Polizeidirektion Nürnberg-Fürth. Diess. B Nr. 1852/28 geh. Kommunistische Zersetzung. SB 4,65/1251/208. Anlage zu Rko No. 4474/28 II. Abschrift. Disposition zur Berichterstattung über den Verlauf der 3. Reichstagung der Roten Jungfront, 3.

113. Cf. Reich, op. cit. 80–1 who, in common with many subsequent writers, has taken the contrary view.

114. Reich, op. cit., 78–9, 81–3.

115. In 1931 the yellow unions gained 5.77 per cent of the votes in mining and the nazis a further 2.43 per cent. In the manufacturing sector the yellow and nazi unions gained 270 mandates as against the RGO's 492. Schöck, op. cit., 252–3, table 19 and 255.

116. Mattheier, op. cit., 204.

117. Schöck, op. cit., 250–3, table 18 and 19.

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